

# *A Commemorative Guide & Roadmap*

• UNAWEEP •  
TABEGUACHE



SCENIC & HISTORIC

**BYWAY**





A photograph of two hikers in a canyon. The hiker in the foreground is wearing a light blue long-sleeved shirt, blue jeans, a white cap, and a large brown backpack. He is smiling and looking towards the camera. The hiker in the background is wearing a blue and white patterned shirt, blue jeans, and a blue cap. They are standing on a rocky path next to a large, reddish-brown rock wall. The sky is blue with some clouds.

*Your Roadmap to the Sights & Attractions of the*

# **UNAWEEP-TABEGUACHE SCENIC & HISTORIC BYWAY**

## *Join Us!*

An adventurous journey through history, geology, culture, and nature awaits you on the UnawEEP-Tabeguache Scenic & Historic Byway (UTB).

The UTB is located in western Colorado, south of the city of Grand Junction. It extends from Whitewater, Colorado to Placerville, Colorado, passing through the communities of Gateway, Naturita, Redvale and Norwood. With short spurs off the Byway to Nucla, Bedrock/Paradox & Disappointment Valley. The UnawEEP-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway is a hidden gem in Colorado's State Byway program, having characteristics and resources of regional, state, national and global significance. Passing through the spectacular canyon country of the Colorado Plateau, the Byway exposes travelers to the scenic, natural, geologic, historic and cultural treasures of the Byway corridor. The Byway corridor contains vast tracts of public land that provide unparalleled recreational opportunities that contribute to the local economies.



## HERITAGE & CULTURE

### NATIVE AMERICAN CULTURE

The Fremont and Anasazi Indians, which lived throughout all of Colorado, inhabited these canyons between 750 A.D. and 1200 A.D. They cultivated crops, built masonry structures and hunted the indigenous wildlife until the 13th century when they disappeared from the area. Most of the artifacts from these ancient civilizations are gone due to natural forces, but some artifacts and petroglyphs are still visible today scattered along the Byway. Later, the Ute Indians came to inhabit this area and are considered the oldest living inhabitants of Western Colorado.

### EARLY EXPLORERS

Two early explorers representing Spain traveled through parts of the Scenic Byway. The first was Juan Antonio Maria de Rivera, who made two trips into what is now western Colorado. In 1765, his expedition was to investigate the possibility of silver mines. The second expedition in 1776 was led by Fray Francisco Atanasio Dominguez and Fray Silvestre Velez de Escalante who

kept a journal that recorded their route and adventures. The expedition's purpose was to find a safe supply route from Santa Fe, New Mexico to the missions in California.

### EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT

Beginning in the 1870's and through the 1920's, various metals and elements were discovered in the canyon walls. Mining for gold, copper and carnonite (used to produce radium, uranium, and vanadium) spurred European settlers to move to the area. By 1922, most of the mining operations were closed until, as a part of the Manhattan Project, the U.S. Army reprocessed the mill tailings to produce uranium used in the first atomic bombs. From the 1940's to the 1980's, uranium mining fluctuated. All mining had ceased until recently. Now mining along the UTB is increasing demand due to oil and gas, as well as uranium.

### RANCHING & AGRICULTURE

The Ute Treaty of 1880 signed by Chief Ouray removed the Ute Indians from the area. There was a massive land rush where ranchers settled throughout the Byway. Many original homesteads are still standing today.

Along with the honest cattle ranchers came horse thieves and outlaws who used the maze of canyons as an easy hideout. Some famous outlaws such as the McCarthy brothers were among the thieves. The McCarty brothers were a group of outlaws run by Tom McCarty, a Mormon bandit who was one of the first to introduce Butch Cassidy to the life of banditry. Tom McCarty and younger brother Bill began to rustle cattle in the 1870s, but by the 1890s, they formed the McCarty Gang and stepped up to robbing banks.

Cattle ranching and farming are a major part of the UTB communities' culture today. During the spring and fall, lucky Byway tourists may encounter a cattle drive.

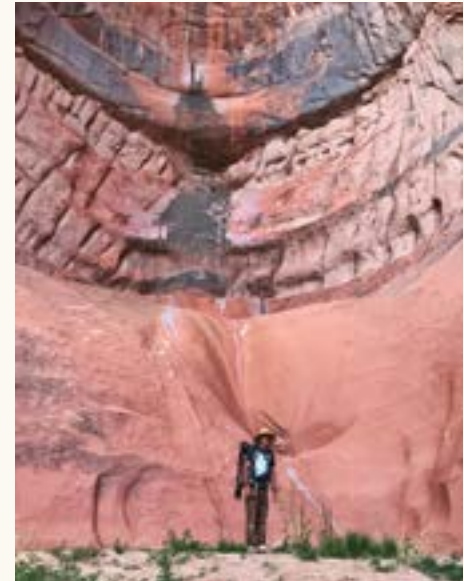
## GEOLOGY & PALEANTOLOGY

### GEOLOGY

The Unaweep/Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway runs through the heart of the Uncompahgre Plateau. About 300 million years ago the area that is now the Plateau was uplifted into a mountain range known as the ancestral Rocky Mountains of "Uncompahgria." Over time the mountain range was eroded down to its roots, furnishing the sand, gravel, and mud for the red rock formations of southwest Colorado. This process of erosion removed over one half billion years' worth of material from the rock record, causing the Chinle Formation of the Triassic Period to lie directly on the Precambrian rocks. More information is included in the Mile Marker Tour section.

### PALEANTOLOGY

Like the pages of a huge book, the rock layers along the Byway reveal information about environments and species that existed here in the ancient past. Well-preserved fossils of reeds, horsetails, ferns, conifer trees and cycads tell us the area was once a lush forest. Paleontologists have found partial skeletons of the Diplodocus and Camarasaurus, dinosaurs who thrived on the abundant plants. Tracks of small carnivorous dinosaurs have been found from Cactus Park to the Dolores River Canyon. Numerous fossils of shelled invertebrates provide a history of the huge seas and lakes that covered the area. In the cliffs around Placerville, nine new types of early amphibians and reptiles have been discovered. Fossil freshwater fish found in the vicinity of Paradox Valley has provided scientists with new information on the evolution of bony fish. Colorful fossilized trees and dinosaur bones were made into stone tools by prehistoric people. Later, fossils were collected by miners for their heavy concentration of uranium ore. Miners tell of piling fossil bones and trees in ore carts and sending them into the crusher at the Uravan mill. Today, fossils are protected by law and can only be collected with a permit.



## WILDLIFE

UTB wildlife includes golden and bald eagles, peregrine falcons, black bears, mountain lions, desert bighorn sheep, bobcats, coyote, elk, deer, fox, rabbits and many more reptiles and mammals. The areas on the rivers and streams (riparian habitat) provide homes for a variety of species including great blue herons and river otters. The streams and rivers themselves are home to rainbow and brown trout and countless aquatic insects. Best viewing takes place early in the morning and in the evening.

To ensure the safety of all creatures wild, domestic, and human – please:

- Drive with caution at all times and especially during low light & visibility hours.
- Use binoculars, spotting scopes or telephoto lenses to view wildlife from a distance.
- If an animal's behavior changes by your presence, you are too close and should back away slowly.
- No matter how tame an animal seems, do not attempt to feed, pet or catch any wildlife.
- For the protection of your pet and all wildlife, pets should be on leashes or kept in your vehicle.



# ATTRACTIONS + ACTIVITIES

## MOUNTAIN BIKING

The thrill of mountain biking is alive and well in the West End and the trails are as diverse as the area itself. From technical single track to mellow 4WD roads, there are mountain bike trails for every rider. Kids and beginners will enjoy the buff singletrack at Thunder Trails and the Burn Canyon Areas outside of Norwood. Advanced cyclists will be challenged on epic rides like the Paradox and Shamrock Trails. There are also a host of road cycling options if you prefer to stick to the pavement.

## HIKING

The Colorado Plateau provides a broad range of hiking and walking options in its diverse ecosystem of mesas, high alpine environments, and dramatic red rock canyons. You and your family can explore endless miles of trails with breathtaking views, birdwatching, petroglyphs, rock formations like arches and much more as you walk through old-growth pinyon and juniper pines, and deep canyons teeming with roaming wildlife.

## ROCK CLIMBING

According to *Out There Colorado*, the West End is home to some of the most storied rock-climbing routes. Most of the rock is sandstone with everything from short crags to pinnacles to long cracks. So, whether you're into bouldering, sport climbing, or crack climbing, there's truly something in this remote destination for every climber, including those with less experience.

## HORSEBACK RIDING

From trail riding to arenas to rodeos, horseback riders and enthusiasts have many options in the West End. The area showcases 30+ trails and countless double tracks and Jeep roads for you to explore on horseback on your own or with an experienced outfitter. If you are more of a spectator, please check out events at the Nucla Rodeo Arena and the San Miguel Fairgrounds in Norwood.

## MOTOR SPORTS

ATV, 4WD, OHV and dirt biking - all great ways to see the varied terrain and most stunning scenery of the West End. Drivers and riders enjoy some of Colorado's best OHV trails and ATV trails that range from singletrack, doubletrack, Jeep roads and historic byways such as the Rimrocker Trail that spans 160 miles. See red rock canyons, winding rivers, desert vistas and alpine forests - all from your side by side or ATV.

## SCENIC DRIVES & TOURS

The highly acclaimed Unaweep Tabeguache Scenic & Historic Byway runs on highway 141 and 145 through the West End. It takes you on a fabulous journey through history, geology, culture, and nature. May other off shoots exist for tours and explorations. SEE OUR GUIDE + MM MAP

## WATER SPORTS

With the confluence of the San Miguel and Dolores Rivers, along with two reservoirs, there are ample opportunities for water sports like stand-up paddle boarding, rafting, and boating.

## HUNTING & FISHING

The great outdoors of the West End offers a host of hunting and fishing opportunities. Hunters enjoy a trophy unit on the Uncompahgre Plateau while fishermen have the Buckeye, Rainbow and Miramonte Reservoirs as well as the San Miguel and Dolores Rivers for fly fishing.

## WINTER RECREATION

The West End offers plenty of winter activities to keep you busy all season long - snowmobiling, snowshoeing, Nordic skiing, fat tire biking, sleigh rides and ice fishing. With significant snowfall at higher elevations, such as Wright's Mesa outside of Norwood, and temperate weather in the valleys, winter can be enjoyable even for those who don't love the cold.



## ASTRONOMY & NIGHT SKIES

The UTB has many stargazing opportunities along the canyon corridors. Locals will tell you about the stars in the West End are stunning and the International Dark Sky Association (IDA) agrees. Norwood was the first town on Colorado's Western Slope to be designated as a "Dark Sky Community". Nucla and Naturita were both added as IDA communities in 2021. This honor has currently been awarded to 22 International Dark Sky Communities around the world, 15 of which are in the US, with others being in Canada, Denmark, Germany, Scotland, and the U.K.

## PETROGLYPHS

The rimrocks of Western Montrose County are rich with history. One hundred and fifty million years ago, this landscape included dinosaurs and lush plants that were eventually deposited in sandstone beds that now define the Morrison Formation. Its massive rock outcroppings of red and gray sandstone provided an excellent medium for the early inhabitants of this area to tell their stories. These rock etchings, although their content may seem primitive and unfamiliar, beckon us to search for the common themes that connect all of humanity throughout the ages. In doing so, we can understand the powerful human need to define our place and purpose on this earth, and to ensure that our lives do not go un-remembered.

## MUSEUMS

Visit the Gateway Car Museum in Gateway. The Rimrocker Historical Society (RHS) has a small museum hosting artifacts of the area's natural history, Native American, pioneer and mining history. RHS also maintains a picnic area and campground at the site of the historic Uravan Ball Park. Wright's Mesa Historical Society Museum is located in the old log cabin on Lucerne Street in Norwood.

## AGRITOURISM

Agritourism is exactly what it sounds like...an intersection of agriculture and tourism where a budding industry is emerging to provide an educational experience to visitors. This is a tour of an orchard, classes on cheese making, wineries and much more in the West End.

## DOLORES RIVER

The Dolores River is a tributary of the Colorado River. It was named by the explorers, Dominguez and Escalante, its name derives from the Spanish El Rio de Nuestra Señora de Dolores, River of Our Lady of Sorrows. These 102 miles stretch of river carves its way through broad valleys and tight canyons with sheer canyon walls. The river drains a rugged and arid region of the Colorado Plateau west of the San Juan Mountains and whitewater boating ranges from flatwater to Class IV rapids (Snaggletooth Rapid), with access points at Bradfield Bridge, Mountain Sheep Point, and Gypsum Valley recreation sites. Depending on private landowner approval access may also be provided at Slick Rock. The Lower Dolores is situated below McPhee Reservoir and therefore flow is based on release from the McPhee Dam.

## SAN MIGUEL RIVER

The San Miguel River starts in the San Juan Mountains southeast of Telluride and flows northwest, along the Uncompahgre Plateau, past the towns of Placerville and Nucla and joins the Dolores in western Montrose County approximately 15 miles east of the state line with Utah. This river is just 81 miles long but is one of the few untamed rivers left in the world.

## RIMROCKER TRAIL

Spanning a distance of 160 miles, the Rimrocker Trail provides 4WD, OHV and bicycle access through some of the West's most stunning scenery. Visitors are immersed in natural beauty as the trail guides them through a landscape of redrock canyons, winding rivers, desert vistas and alpine forests.



# UNAWEEP · TABEQUACHE

## SCENIC & HISTORIC BYWAY



### QUICK REFERENCE

#### START: JUNCTION CO HWY 50 & HWY 141

- MM 154 Whitewater - Interpretive Signs
- MM 152.9 East Creek Canyon
- MM 149.7 East Creek Day Use
- MM 149.2 East Creek Day Use
- Dispersed Primitive Camping Sites
- MM 151 Nine Mile Hill
- MM 145.4 East Creek Designated OHV Route
- MM 145.1 Grand Valley Overlook - Interpretive Sign
- MM 145 Cactus Park Recreation Site
- MM 143 Geology
- MM 140 UnawEEP Canyon Geology
- MM 139.8 Divide Road
- MM 137.3 UnawEEP Climbing
- MM 134 UnawEEP Divide (Elevation 7,048 Ft.)
- MM 133 Wildcat Trail
- MM 131.5 Fall Creek Waterfall
- MM 129.5 Driggs Mansion & Thimble Rock - Interpretive Sign
- MM 119.7 UnawEEP Seep - Interpretive Sign
- MM 117 West Creek Picnic Area - Interpretive Sign
- MM 115.2 The Niche Road
- MM 111 Gateway - Interpretive Sign
- MM 111.1 Public Land Access - County Road 4.2
- MM 110.8 Public Land Access - County Road 4.1
- MM 110.5 John Brown Canyon Road
- MM 106 Geology Of The Dolores River Canyon
- MM 101.3 Salt Creek / Sinbad Valley - County Road Z6 - Interpretive Sign
- MM 99 Petroglyphs
- MM 92.1 Sewemup Mesa Trailhead
- MM 91.5 The Spring
- MM 88.5 Roc Creek
- MM 88 Petroglyphs
- MM 86 Mesa Creek - County Road P12
- MM 84 Biscuit Rock - County Road Q13
- MM 83.4 Coke Oven
- MM 82.1 Horse Collar & John Christian's Grave (Right) Mailman's Ladder (Left)
- MM 81.5 The Hanging Flume - Interpretive Signs
- MM 80.9 Mining History - Interpretive Sign
- MM 80.3 The Confluence Of The San Miguel & Dolores Rivers Overlook
- MM 79.7 Cactus Park Recreation Site (Site Development, In Progress)
- MM 78.7 The Donkey
- MM 77.5 Club Ranch Corrals

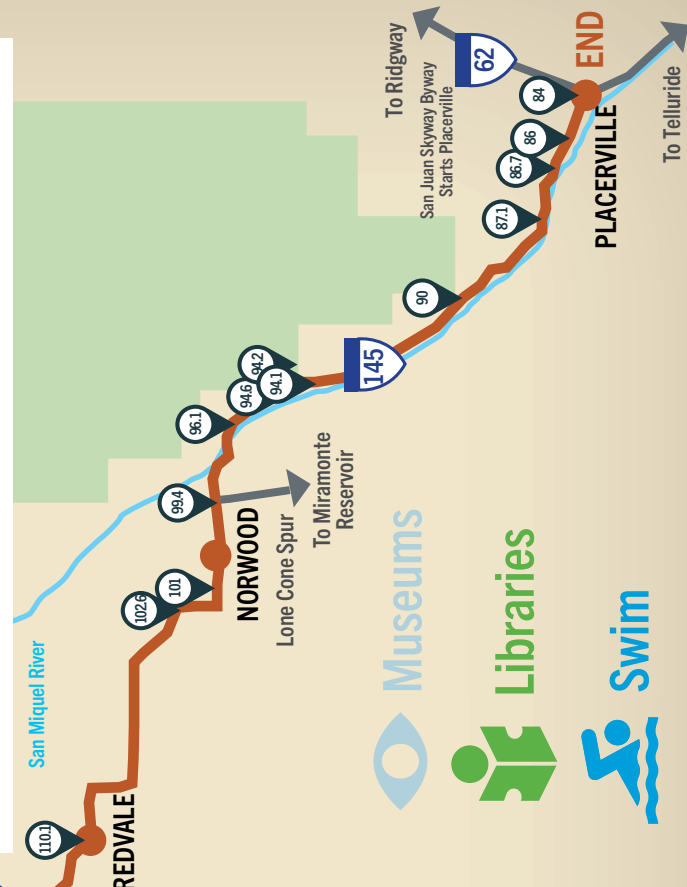
- MM 77.5 Atkinson Mesa - County Road S17
- MM 76.4 Y11 Road (River Road) & Shamrock Trail
- MM 76 Public Land Access - Road U18
- MM 76 Ghost Town Of Uravan - Interpretive Sign
- MM 75.7 Storage Cave
- MM 74.2 Uravan Ball Park Campground / Kiosk
- MM 74.2 Tabeguache Creek - County Road V19
- MM 74 Nature Conservancy - San Miguel River Tabeguache Preserve
- MM 64.3 Calamity Road (Nucla Loop)
- MM 62.4 Junction CO Hwy 141 & Hwy 90: Paradox/Bedrock Spur
- MM 62.3 Dominguez & Escalante Expedition - Historic Marker/Interpretive Sign
- MM 62.3 Vancorum
- MM 60.7 Naturita
- MM 60.4 Junction CO Hwy 141 & Hwy 97: Nucla Spur
- MM 57.5 Public Land Access - Hwy 90
- MM 116.8 Junction CO Hwy 141 & Hwy 145: UT Byway - Hwy 145 Disappointment Valley Spur - Hwy 141
- MM 110.1 Redvale
- MM 102.6 Public Land Access - Road A 42
- MM 101 Norwood
- MM 99.4 Miramonte Reservoir & Lone Cone Spur - Road 44
- MM 96.1 Norwood Hill Recreation Site - Interpretive Sign
- County Road 47
- MM 94.6 Lower Beaver Creek Recreation Site
- MM 94.2 Upper Beaver Creek Recreation Site & Boat Launch
- MM 94.1 Public Land Access - X48 Road
- MM 90 Nature Conservancy - San Miguel Canyon Preserve
- MM 87.1 Species Creek Recreation Site
- MM 86.7 Corral Site Recreation Area
- MM 86 Caddis Flats Recreation Site
- MM 84 (Hwy 145) Placerville

#### END - JUNCTION CO HWY 62 & HWY 145



- Dispersed Primitive Campsites
- Public Land Access
- Trailhead
- Developed Campsites
- Picnic Tables
- Restrooms
- Stargazing
- Lodging
- Fuel/Services
- EV Charging

- Museums
- Libraries
- Swim





# Take the Tour

## MILE MARKER TOUR + BYWAY POINTS OF INTEREST

This tour takes you along the Unaweep-Tabeguache Scenic and Historic Byway, State Highway 141 and 145. Although primarily an auto tour, there are several points of interest that can only be reached by way of short hikes a couple-hundred yards or less. Be alert for the designated mile markers (MM) and if you are slowing your speed please be aware of the traffic around you; for safety always signal your intentions. Mile markers are approximate. The tour guides you from Whitewater to Placerville, Colorado.

### KEY

 Dispersed Primitive Campsites

 Public Land Access

 Trailhead

 Developed Campsites

 Picnic Tables

 Restrooms

 Stargazing

 Fuel/Services

 EV Charging Station

 Lodging

 Museums

 Libraries

 Cemeteries

 Swim

### Begin Here

#### JUNCTION CO HWY 50 & HWY 141

Head south on Hwy 141 from Hwy 50 at Whitewater, CO

#### MM 154 WHITEWATER - Interpretive Signs

Some of the Grand Valley's first orchards were located in Whitewater. The town draws its name from Whitewater Creek, whose banks are white because of a high alkali content. Soon after turning onto Highway 141 a sign directs the traveler to a boat launch along the Gunnison River. This access provides a way for boaters to get their watercraft in or out of the river. Upriver, the Gunnison flows through a deeply cut canyon for many miles within the Dominguez-Escalante National Conservation Area. It is a mellow float and very popular. Within a half mile the highway crosses the Gunnison River.

#### Local Attractions:

Gateway Boat Ramp - MM 154 turn left on Desert Road, then right on Mill Tailings Rd.

#### MM 152.9 EAST CREEK CANYON

A left turn just after the first bridge onto County Road 34.4 leads to a rugged natural surface road that climbs along the east rim of East Creek Canyon. The road requires a high clearance vehicle and is popular with motorized recreationalists. There are also several hiking opportunities from the road. The road is within the Dominguez – Escalante National Conservation Area. It is also part of the Tabeguache Trail that crosses the highway at that point on its way to Grand Junction.

#### MM 151 NINE MILE HILL

The beginning climb of Nine-Mile Hill. Large blocks and boulders of the Burro Canyon Formation litter the slopes. These fossil laden deposits represent lush, well watered continental environments of the Lower Cretaceous Period. The area is a popular rock climbing and bouldering venue. Several pullouts provide access to the climbing areas.

Occasionally, desert bighorn sheep can be seen along the road. Desert bighorn sheep were reintroduced to the desert canyons of western Colorado starting in the 1990's by Colorado Parks and Wildlife. Decisions about where the sheep would be placed were partially determined by the presence of desert bighorn sheep petroglyphs in the nearby canyons made by prehistoric inhabitants of the region.

This is a popular recreation area for relatively unimproved exploration via hiking and horseback riding. The Tabeguache trail, a long distance mixed use trail popular with mountain bikers, motorcycle riders and jeep enthusiasts, also runs through the Ninemile Hill area.

#### Recreation Sites:

- MM 149.7 East Creek Day Use
- MM 149.2 East Creek Day Use
- Dispersed primitive camping sites
- MM 145.4 East Creek Designated OHV Route

#### MM 145.1 GRAND VALLEY OVERLOOK

##### Interpretive Sign

As the highway tops out at Nine Mile Hill there is a wide pullout on the west side of the highway with interpretive signs. The Grand Valley Overlook provides a view of the Grand Valley far below and the Bookcliffs and Mt. Garfield that rises above the valley. A gate adjacent to the pullout allows access to a trail that leads to segments of the old wagon road. The grade presented a sizable obstacle to horse-drawn wagons in the early days with intermittent 18% grades.

#### MM 145 CACTUS PARK RECREATION SITE

The Cactus Park Road provides access to many miles of roads and motorized trails, including the Tabeguache Trail. The road is a major access point for the Dominguez – Escalante National Conservation Area (NCA), including the Dominguez Wilderness Area. The NCA has a map of designated routes. The Cactus Park area has been designated as a Special Recreation Management Area with an emphasis on motorized recreation but is also used by mountain bikers and equestrians. There is a staging/parking area, restrooms & campsites are designated, but undeveloped. High clearance vehicles are recommended.

#### MM 143 GEOLOGY

The deep rusty red Chinle Formation gives way to Precambrian rock. The age of this metamorphic rock is approximately 1.7 billion years old, while the Chinle's age is 210 million years old. The huge time gap probably indicates erosional activity and is referred to as the Great Unconformity.

#### MM 140 UNAWEEP CANYON GEOLOGY

The full extent of Unaweep Canyon comes into view. The Precambrian metamorphic rocks and granite form impressive cliffs over 1,200 feet high. The origin of Unaweep Canyon has been a topic of debate by geologists for many years. One theory that is broadly accepted is that Unaweep Canyon is the ancestral channel of the Gunnison River and possibly the Colorado River. A deposit of Gunnison River gravels in nearby Cactus Park and the direct alignment of Unaweep and DeBeque Canyon of the Colorado River bolsters that theory. The presence of Gunnison River gravels near Gateway, CO supports the Gunnison River only theory. The canyon also sports some evidence of alpine glaciation – note the U-shaped canyon walls, impressive cirques and hanging valleys.

#### MM 139.8 DIVIDE ROAD

The Divide Road (FR 402) begins its 83-mile long journey up to and along the crest of the Uncompahgre Plateau. The Divide Road provides important access to a wide swathe of public lands. The road begins with a few switchbacks that get it up on a narrow bench of Precambrian rock. A bird's eye view of Unaweep Canyon is possible about 2 miles up the road.

Some 6 miles up the Divide Road the Dominguez Road heads off to the left. The road allows access to the Dominguez-Escalante NCA and leads to a few developed campsites and a wilderness trailhead in upper Dominguez Canyon. There are also a few undeveloped campsites along the road, but the surface of the road may discourage bigger camping rigs.

The road is also part of the far-ranging Tabeguache Trail. The Smith Point Trail (636), open to hikers, mountain bikers and equestrians, wanders up-canyon from the road. Once beyond Dominguez Creek, the Tabeguache Trail climbs out of the canyon and then follows the Dominguez Trail that has been used as a stock driveway since the early ranching days. Beyond the Dominguez Road, the Divide Road provides access to numerous motorized and non-motorized trails including the popular Carson Hole hiking trail.

#### MM 137.3 UNAWEEP CLIMBING

On the right-hand side of the road is an inconspicuous parking area that has been established for those who want to climb the sheer cliffs of Unaweep. The Access Fund manages three parcels that contain some of the best rock-climbing walls in Unaweep Canyon.

#### MM 134 UNAWEEP DIVIDE (elevation 7,048 ft.)

Unaweep Divide pullout provides a viewpoint of an inconspicuous sage brush flat. From this point the topography drops to the east to form East Creek, or west to form West Creek. The Ute Indians name for this place, Un-a-weep, means “canyon with two mouths”. It is unique because the two creeks flow out of opposite ends of the same canyon. There are multiple explanations for the

origin of the Unaweep Canyon (see MM 140). In the late 19th century, members of the Hayden Survey recognized the canyon's oddity; it's the only geological oddity of its kind in the world. Some geologists suggest that Unaweep Canyon is the result of a large fault across the breadth of the Uncompahgre Plateau that the Gunnison River followed, and then abandoned as uplifting occurred.

#### MM 133 WILDCAT TRAIL

The Wildcat Trailhead (640) is located on the south side of the road. The trail crosses the floor of the canyon, then makes a dramatic, steep ascent to the Uncompahgre Plateau, and offers stunning views of Unaweep Canyon. The trail is designated for foot and equestrian use. You may have noticed the bird nesting boxes attached to fence posts for the last few miles.

The Unaweep Bluebird Trail, started by Bob Wilson in 1999, is part of the Nest Box Network monitored by Cornell College of Ornithology. Local volunteers monitor 57 nests for species, egg numbers, fledglings and any unusual activity. Per Mr. Wilson, “Some boxes are placed in pairs as some species were taking over existing nests and killing young... The birds that use the nesting boxes are Mountain and Western bluebirds, Ash-throated flycatchers, Mountain chickadees, House wrens.”

#### MM 131.5 FALL CREEK WATERFALL

Fall Creek Waterfall on the north side of Highway 141 is one of several waterfalls in the Unaweep Canyon. The waterfall is on private land with no public access.

#### MM 129.5 DRIGGS MANSION & THIMBLE ROCK

##### Interpretive Sign

The pullout for the Driggs Mansion is on the south side of the highway. The stone building was built between 1914 and 1918 by Lawrence Driggs, a wealthy author and socialite from New York. Driggs hired local stonemasons, Nunzio Grasso and his son, to build the structure. Sandstone from a nearby canyon was used to construct the home. Legend has it that Driggs had built the “mansion” for his wife, but some say he planned to use it as a hunting lodge. In 1923 he sold the property.

Over the decades the building had fallen into disrepair and was being vandalized. Concern about the structure's condition spawned an effort to save it. In 2005 Alpine Archaeological Consultants did an assessment of the structure resulting in a report that recommended stabilization of the mansion. Alpine performed the stabilization in 2012. The mansion is on private property, so visitation isn't allowed. The prominent rock outcropping that towers over the mansion is Thimble Rock – note the intrusive pegmatite dikes and sills that give the granite cliffs their unique coloration.

#### MM 119.7 UNAWEEP SEEP

##### Interpretive Sign

Locally known as “Swamp Hill”, the 79-acre Unaweep Seep is a very special wetland that has been designated as an Area of Critical Concern (ACEC) by the BLM. Spectacular granite cliffs rise above a unique, biologically diverse riparian area. The seep is home to a variety of water-loving plants including the rare Giant Helleborine and Canyon Bog orchid. One of a few known populations of the Nokomis Fritillary butterfly makes the seep its home. The diminutive butterfly's caterpillar feeds on the Northern Bog violet. There is a large pullout with interpretive signs on the left

Towering 3,000 feet above Unaweep Seep to the north is Camel Point. Camel Point is not named for its resemblance to a camel, but rather after an outlaw by that name who carried the body of one of his victims to the top of the rock, throwing it off the edge in an attempt to hide his crime. He was later captured and punished.

#### MM 117 WEST CREEK PICNIC AREA

##### Interpretive Sign

The West Creek Picnic Area, maintained by the BLM, is on the right. There are a few picnic tables, shady parking spots and an ADA restroom – a nice place to take a break and enjoy the surrounding natural beauty. West Creek has cut a narrow drainage through ancient rock. The clear waters of the stream hold trout and are open to fishing.

#### MM 115.2 THE NICHE ROAD

The Niche Road (CR 6.3) takes off to the left. The dirt road, built in the 1920s, initially travels up Casto Draw before making an impressive climb up (SOB Hill) through the Niche. Once past the Niche the road enters the Uncompahgre National Forest, becoming the Pine Mountain Road (CR 19 ½, FR 405). The road continues south to intersect with roads that lead out to Tenderfoot, Calamity and Maverick mesas.

The maze of maintained and unmaintained roads to the nearby mesa area have mostly to do with carnotite mining back in the first half of the 20th Century. The radium boom, starting in 1912, began several cycles of West End mining. Back in those days carnotite was hauled out in mule trains to Whitewater. If you want to get a sense of what those early mule skinner went through, try mountain biking the old Pickett Trail. The trail drops off the Tenderfoot Mesa Road (FR 405.3c) and was used to haul ore from the mines. The trail isn't for the faint of heart, and superior route-finding and bike handling-skills are required.

Vanadium was the next big mining boom from around 1936 to 1944. Vanadium, another element in carnotite, was used to harden steel. In 1943-44 the U.S. government began extracting uranium for carnotite and the mill tailings in Gateway and Uravan. Uranium was used in the top-secret Manhattan Project that built the first atom bombs dropped on Japan in World War II.

The backcountry roads in this area are very popular with jeepers, ATV'ers and history buffs. The old Calamity Camp used by miners from the 1920's until the 1950's is on the National Register of Historic Places. Visiting the remains of the old mining days is a lot of fun, but please be careful. Don't go into old mines and be very careful around old buildings – they can be unstable. Use extreme caution when traveling the backroads.

#### MM 111 GATEWAY

##### Interpretive Sign

So named as the “Gateway” to the spectacular slickrock country of the Dolores River Canyon. The river valley around Gateway was settled in the late 1880s by folks from back east. The town was the hub for the north Dolores River country for many years. Ranching was the lifeblood of Gateway, but mining had a big impact on the economy, as well. The remains of the abandoned Nisley and Wilson Vanadium Mill rest in testimony to the mining boom of the 1930s and 1940s. By 1950 carnotite ore from the nearby mines was hauled to a mill in Grand Junction.

The first settlers of the north Dolores River region followed a well-established trail through Unaweep Canyon developed by Native Americans. When the first explorers, fur trappers, miners and settlers arrived in western Colorado they were greeted by Native Americans, who called themselves ‘Nuche’, we call the Utes. The archaeological record places their arrival in western Colorado to sometime after the 1400's. Their migration into the intermountain west was part of a larger movement of Numic language speakers from the Great Basin around A. D. 1000.

Prior to contact with Euro-Americans the Ute bands lived a transient subsistence lifestyle that took them through an established territory in search of the necessities of

life. Their hunter/gatherer ways were much like those of the Desert Culture they replaced. That lifestyle was dramatically altered with the arrival of the horse in the 18th Century. The acquisition of the horse wasn't equally distributed among the Utes. Ute bands closest to the Spanish in the south had horses before bands in northern Colorado. By the early 1800s most Utes had horses and were ranging out from their traditional territories. The horse allowed the Utes to travel greater distances, be more effective hunters and move to favored camps more efficiently.

An extensive Ute trail system through the Dolores River Canyon spread out over the Uncompahgre Plateau and into the La Sal Mountains. Most of those trails are now covered over by today's roads, but a few fragile remnants remain today. Ute rock art graces the canyon walls in several places along the Byway. Gateway is surrounded by public lands managed by the BLM.

#### Local Attractions

- The beautiful resort is Gateway Canyons Resort, offering fine dining, lodging and various adventures. The resort was built by John Hendricks, Discovery Channel founder and former Discovery Communications chairman.
- The world class Gateway Auto Museum
- The iconic rock formation associated with Gateway is “the Palisade”. It's been said the massive red rock formation looks like a huge boat and serves as Gateways backdrop to endless outdoor adventure.
- Gateway Community Park
- Public Land Access

#### MM 111.1 PUBLIC LAND ACCESS - COUNTY ROAD 4.2



County Road 4.2 takes off to the right and parallels the Dolores River for several miles before intersecting with gnarly two tracks that head out towards Steamboat Mesa, Granite Creek, and a piece of seldom visited country called the Dolores Triangle, by that time the traveler is in Utah. This piece of backcountry heaven is only frequented by the most adventurous souls and ranchers tending to their slow elk (cattle).

#### MM 110.8 PUBLIC LAND ACCESS - COUNTY ROAD 4.1



County Road 4.1 bears right. There are several undeveloped campsites along the road within a few miles of Gateway. Eventually the road crosses into Utah. The impressive Stateline Rapid on the Dolores River is immediately off the right side of the road. A bumpy dirt road follows the river canyon for several miles to the mouth of Cottonwood Creek. A few miles to the southwest as the crow flies over unroaded and untrailed terrain lies the infamous Rose Garden Hill along Kokopelli's Trail. Once across the state line remnants of ranching activity can be seen along the road. The historic Hubbard Ranch occupies the flats adjacent to the mouth of Beaver Creek. The Hubbard's settled here in 1912, and along with the Young's, Massey's, Casto's and Ames' were some of the early homesteaders in the valley. Nearby the old Hubbard place Indian rock art can be found on sandstone walls. The petroglyphs (pecked into the stone) were made by Native Americans – Utes and their predecessors inscribed the images as an expression of their beliefs, to communicate with each other and record events they experienced. Please refrain from touching the rock art or disturbing archaeological sites.

#### Local Attractions

Gateway Trails Trailhead, at the back entrance to Gateway Canyons Resort. Turn left on 4.1 Road for .5 miles, turn left for 1/10th of mile & the trailhead is on the right.



**MM 110.5 JOHN BROWN CANYON ROAD**  🟡🟢🔴 County Road 4.4 bears to the right. Driving about five and 1/2 miles up this road will take you to the summit overlooking the town of Castle Valley, UT. At the summit in the canyon to the right is an area that has several embedded dinosaur tracks. The road has been a major transportation artery for many years despite its mostly unpaved nature. It is part of the Gateway-Castleton Road that connects the Colorado River Valley north of Moab with the North Dolores River Valley. The road wastes no time climbing out of the river canyon, then winds its way over miles of highlands adjacent to the La Sal Mountains in Utah. The Paradox and Kokopelli’s trails follow sections of the road. It is well-maintained, but can be slippery during late winter mud season, heavy summer rains and late fall storms – no winter maintenance. The road is named after a turn of the century rancher from Moab, UT who grazed horses in nearby Kirks Basin. The road provides access to the many carnotite mines overlooking Gateway. About 0.4 miles up the road an unobtrusive sign marks the end of the Dynamite Trail that is part of the Gateway Trails system.

**MM 106 GEOLOGY OF THE DOLORES RIVER CANYON** Pull off the Byway onto any number of wide spots in the road, be aware of traffic. Look to the southwest and closely inspect the slopes of the brick red Moenkopi Formation. Careful viewing will reveal scattered exposures of white rock. The white rock is alabaster, a rare form of relatively soft sedimentary rock that is used by sculptors. Most alabaster is mined in Italy and is pure white. The Dolores Canyon alabaster has streaks of pink running through it. The alabaster deposits are on private property so please don’t trespass.

This is a good place to observe the geologic strata that make up the scenic North Dolores River Valley. The Byway rests on the Cutler Formation consisting of interlayered marine, freshwater and sand dune deposits that were laid down from 280 to 240 million years ago. The Cutler Formation creates a hodge-podge of slopes and cliffs. It is particularly well exposed along the Cutler Rim Trail of the Gateway Trails system. The brown and red sediments of the Moenkopi Formation rest on top of the Cutler. Shale, siltstone, limestone from a shallow sea, and tidal and mudflats make up this formation. Approximate age of the Moenkopi is 225 to 215 million years old.

Resting on top of the Moenkopi Formation is the sloped multi-colored Chinle Formation. Aged at around 210 million years old, this formation is made up of fine deposits from stream and lake origins. The Chinle is well known for uranium-bearing deposits of carnotite and petrified wood. The Cliff-forming Wingate Sandstone sits on top of the Chinle Formation. These impressive cliffs represent deposits of windblown sand that covered most of the Colorado Plateau around 200 million years ago. Deposits of the brown Kayenta Formation replace the Wingate cliffs. Ledges and terraces characterize this geologic layer. The salmon colored Entrada Formation is next. The multi-hued cliffs of the fossil and dinosaur bone bearing, uranium rich Morrison Formation are well exposed on top of the Entrada.

**MM 101.3 SALT CREEK/SINBAD VALLEY - COUNTY ROAD Z 6** **Interpretive Sign**  🟡🟢 County Road Z6 meets the Byway just before the Salt Creek Bridge. Z6 follows Salt Creek some 4 plus miles on an intermittently bumpy road until it reaches Sinbad Valley. The high cliffs on the left form an almost impenetrable barrier to Sewemup Mesa. About five miles up this canyon there is a strange stain on the right side of the canyon wall, it looks like a sailing ship. There is also a copper mine on the right wall, called the Copper Nugget. On the right is the Sinbad Valley and Sew em’ up Mesa

pullout. Sinbad Valley at the head of Salt Creek is a salt valley created by the collapse of the sedimentary formations on top of subterranean salt and gypsum deposits. Paradox Valley to the south has the same origins.

The high mesa to the left of Salt Creek is Sew ‘Em Up Mesa. It is one of the true wild places in western Colorado and has been designated as a wilderness study area. There are no formal trails to the mesa and only a few natural breaks in the rimrock to allow passage. Back in the 1890s rustlers took full advantage of the mesa’s remoteness and limited access. Back in those days many of the small ranching operations resorted to cattle rustling to stay afloat. After cutting a few head of cattle from one of the large cattle company’s herds, the rustlers would hide the livestock in some protected pocket on the mesa, then proceed to cut out the existing brand and sew ‘em up to hide their deed. Once the cowboy surgery healed, they were branded with the rustler’s brand.

Ahead the river canyon begins to narrow with cliffs rising precipitously. Golden eagles and ravens frequent these canyon walls. (High clearance vehicle & map needed.)

**MM 99 PETROGLYPHS**

Access a lightly used path on the cliff side of the roadway. Just a short walk from the roadway is a large boulder with examples of petroglyphs.

**MM 92.1 SEWEMUP MESA TRAILHEAD**  🟡

Trailhead access is on the cliff side of the roadway. From the trailhead, hike up a good trail to a perched gravel bed that has placer workings. Travel around the left side of the workings and pick up a narrow trail marked by small rock cairns. Follow the cairms up through a portion of broken-down cliff until you reach the top of a small knoll. From here the views are expansive. The trail goes west passing onto a number of small areas of slick rock, veering left on the south side of a small sandstone topped hill. The trail stops at the first good drainage to the west of the hill. The trail (an old, abandoned cattle trail) is an entrance route into the remote BLM Wilderness Study Area. From here, cross-country travel in any direction is possible.

**MM 91.5 THE SPRING**

This is a natural spring with delicious, cool water. The water is untreated. The seep emanates from the interface between the Chinle and Wingate formations, and the nearby rock is covered with mosses and water-loving plants that inhabit this unique micro-environment. A nice place to stop and refresh as travelers have done for years.

**MM 88.5 ROC CREEK**

This was the headquarters of Roc Creek Ranches established in the early 1900s. The town of Uranium was once located here as well as the Rajah, the first big uranium mine of the region.

**MM 88 PETROGLYPHS**

Walk from the mile marker on the north of the roadway, stay left of the large boulder, and on to the rock face. Several rock art etchings can be seen on this section of the overhang, although they have worn down with time.

**MM 86 MESA CREEK - COUNTY ROAD P 12**  🟡🟢🔴 This graveled road provides access to the Mesa Creek drainages, Blue Mesa and the Campbell Point Road. The road quickly climbs to a bench that grades into the meadows and flats along the North Fork of Mesa Creek – notice Blue Mesa above on the left.

The Mesa Creek drainages have a wealth of backcountry roads quite suitable for off-road vehicle adventures. The Paradox Trail comes out of Blue Basin, then follows

P 16 Road out of the South Fork of Mesa Creek before connecting with P 12 Road as it crosses Mesa Creek and drops down to the Byway. High clearance vehicle + map needed for backcountry travel.

**MM 84 BISCUIT ROCK - COUNTY ROAD Q13**  🟡🟢🔴

The big round rock is a local landmark. Just below is a bridge where the road crosses the river and goes up to Carpenter Ridge above Paradox Valley. There are remainders of rock piles where the water carried from the flume finally ended as it shot at the hillside. In the cliff below the road there is a big cave that has been excavated by archaeologists over the years.

The dirt road crossing the bridge continues up to Carpenter Ridge, which spans the length of the Paradox Valley, west of here. This route is the western section of the 166 mile long Rimrocker Trail, that crosses the backcountry from Montrose, Colorado to Moab, Utah. The 118 mile long Paradox Trail also crosses the Dolores River at this point, allowing bikepacking mountain bikers access to Red Canyon and Carpenter Ridge.

**MM 83.4 COKE OVEN**

On the west side of the road is a dome shaped coke oven built in the 1880’s. Coal was heated in the oven to produce coke, a combustible material that burns practically smoke free. It is believed that coke from the oven was used by blacksmiths during the construction of the Hanging Flume.

**MM 82.1 HORSE COLLAR & JOHN CHRISTIAN’S GRAVE (Right) MAILMAN’S LADDER (Left)**  🟡

A dirt road on both sides of the highway leads to these interesting sites. Both are just a short hike off the highway.

On the slickrock face to the left you can see the remnants of a ladder etched in stone. The steps have worn down over the years, and the handrail has fallen away. The ladder was used in earlier days to go down to pick up mail at a box along the road. Each evening a man would walk down and back, bringing the mail for all the men working in the mines in the area.

The road on the right points you toward a unique rock formation on the opposite side of the river. Water runoff from above has washed a hole through the rocky cliff and falls a great distance to the bank of the river where it has washed a small pond before entering the river. Old time locals called this the Horse Collar.

Park your vehicle and hike down toward the rim. Slightly to the left of the path is a grave marker for John Christian. John was a member of the Royal Family of Denmark. At the age of 21 all male members of the Royal Family were expected to serve in the army. John did not want to go, so he rowed his boat far out in the North Sea, near a steamship that was bound for the U.S. He cleared immigration and came West where he built a cabin near here using wood from the flume, and worked for the Club Ranch. He was a handyman and farrier for the ranch, and an inventor. He created donkey “ice shoes”, and was working on a perpetual motion machine. One day the ranch owners stopped by with some groceries for John and they found him dead. They buried him, marked his grave with a stone, and burned the cabin.

**MM 81.5 THE HANGING FLUME**  🔴 **Interpretive Signs**

This kiosk tells a little of the history of the Hanging Flume and offers a great overlook providing a bird’s eye view of the Hanging Flume that clings to the canyon wall below. In the late 1880s there was a major gold strike along Mesa Creek Flats below the confluence of the San Miguel and Dolores Rivers. The Montrose Placer Mining Company,

composed of wealthy St. Louis investors bought six-and-a-half miles of mining claims along the rivers. The gold was there, but in what quantity nobody knew. What they did know was that they needed a large supply of water to wash the gold from the gravel beds—four miles down river from the confluence. When the flume builders ran out of earth for a ditch, they constructed a wooden flume and hung it onto the canyon walls high above the river. It was an open water chute six feet wide and four feet high, built from 1.8 million board feet of lumber. It rested on brackets bolted to the cliff with the end of the bolts driven 18 inches into the rock. Additional support came from a brace extending diagonally down from the outer edge of each bracket to a groove cut into the rock wall and anchored with a spike driven through the wood and deep into the rock. Sometimes the lumber was transported down the finished flume bed, at other times the workers swung down from the top of the cliff in a bosun’s chair. Not one worker was killed on the project. The flume transferred 80 million gallons of water over a 24 hour period. The total length of the ditch and flume was 13 miles. It functioned for three years, but failed to turn a profit—the gold was too fine and washed away with the hydraulic pressure. Today the Hanging Flume is listed by the Worlds Monument Fund as one of the “100 most endangered Sites in the World.

**MM 80.9 MINING HISTORY Interpretive Sign**

After sorting ore from the rock, miners shipped the ore to the mill and the rock spoils were dumped over the hills. Look for similar mine dumps along the route.

**MM 80.3 THE CONFLUENCE OF THE SAN MIGUEL & DOLORES RIVERS OVERLOOK**

On the west side of the road is a dirt road that will take you to the canyon’s edge or by taking a short hike to the cliff edge will give you a long view of the confluence and the river canyons. The Dominguez and Escalante Expedition first named the Dolores River, “El Rio de Nuestra Señora de Dolores” or “The River of Our Lady of Sorrows”. The San Miguel River was originally called “Rio de San Pedro”.

**MM 79.7 CACTUS PARK RECREATION SITE (site development, in progress)**  🟡

A BLM day use site provides a stop to stretch your legs, have a tailgate picnic & overlook the canyon of the San Miguel River canyon.

**MM 78.7 THE DONKEY**

To the east on the red rock cliff, the donkey was painted in 1955 by a miner who lived in a cave house. It symbolized their use in the mines. The donkey has been painted many different colors over the years.

**MM 77.5 CLUB RANCH CORRALS**

On the river side of the roadway, the corrals are one of the few remaining remnants of the Club Ranch that occupied the river bottom where Uravan was built. Lumber for the corrals reportedly came from the Hanging Flume. These corrals also held the livestock used at Uravan. About the Club Ranch, in the 1880s, Dr. Dearborn, a retired army doctor, got an option on placer claims and range land along the San Miguel River. He enticed friends back East to partner with him and form the San Miguel Cattle Company. They bought herds of cattle that were coming up from Texas, and at one time the Club ran 10,000 head of cattle on their range. The ranch changed hands several times until about 1910 when Standard Chemical bought the property on the west side of the river. The ranch was named after the “clubs” card suit.

**MM 77.5 ATKINSON MESA - COUNTY ROAD S 17**  🟡🟢🔴 The road provides access to Atkinson Mesa and all its backcountry routes, including the Rimrocker Trail. The maze of backcountry roads on the mesa is enjoyed by Jeepers, ATV’ers and mountain bikers. The mesa is littered with old mines and remnants of the uranium mining era. Carnotite ore wasn’t the only thing miners hauled out of those mines. There are many stories of huge dinosaur bones mixed in with the ore.

**MM 76.4 Y 11 ROAD (RIVER ROAD) & SHAMROCK TRAIL**  🟡🔴 After turning west on Y 11 Road (maintained gravel road), continue down the river on the west side of the San Mlguel River. Locals know this route as the “River Road” as it connects the old town of Uravan to Bedrock. This is an enjoyable canyon drive and the perfect viewing area for the historic remnants of the flume. The popular hiking and biking Shamrock Trail is accessed to west of Y11 Road just past the old Black Bridge. The confluence of the San Miguel & Dolores Rivers is a popular recreation spot for fishing, dispersed camping, picnicking and outdoor recreation.

Flume Reconstruction Project - In 2012, with the support of History Colorado and private funders, teams of experts came together here to find the answer to “how did they do that?” 48 feet of the flume has been re-built (using modern day tools) in five days, working over the edge of the cliff here. The project can be viewed, as well as an informative kiosk, on a short side trip, 3.2 miles down the River Rd./County Road Y 11.

**MM 76 PUBLIC LAND ACCESS - ROAD U 18**  🟡🟢

This road leads up to a great viewing spot where you can take in the whole layout of Uravan. The road once led to the Uravan Airport, no longer in existence.

**MM 76 GHOST TOWN OF URAVAN**

**Interpretive Sign**

In 1914 Standard Chemical built the Joe Jr. Mill here, to process carnotite ore that was being mined locally. At this time radium was recovered from the ore and used for radiology research and painting luminous dials. By 1918 the company owned 375 mining claims in the area and employed 200 men in its southwestern Colorado plants. The company ultimately produced 74 grams of radium (at \$70,000 a gram), roughly 47% of the country’s entire domestic radium production.

In 1928 U S Vanadium (USV) bought this property, including the ore processing mill, and developed the town, giving it a new name: Uravan—for URAnium + VANadium. It grew into a bustling company town of 1,500 people, with all the modern amenities of the times. They operated 940 local mines and processed 240 tons of ore a day for vanadium, used in hardening steel in war armaments. There were 4,000 workers in the total operations. In the 1940s, uranium was milled here under the Manhattan Project and used in the first atomic bombs. Following WWII, Uranium was processed for peaceful purposes. After years of booms and busts, in 1984 the Uranium industry in this area finally shut down. In December of 1986, the last resident left “kicking and screaming”. The town was dismantled, shredded, and buried as part of a Superfund cleanup project.

**MM 75.7 STORAGE CAVE**

Look carefully on the cliff side of the roadway to spot this opening, mining blasting supplies were stored here during Uravan’s mining days.

**MM 74.2 URAVAN BALL PARK CAMPGROUND / Kiosk**

 🔴🟢🟡🔴🟢🟡

This park was dedicated on July 4, 1957 as the Carbide Recreation Park. It consisted of a picnic area and grassy baseball field—complete with lights, and was a popular spot for the people of Uravan and the West End community. The Rimrocker Historical Society maintains this historic site as a picnic and campground. The campground serves as an outdoor recreation hub due to it’s easy access to public land. Popular access points include; Y11 Road, U18, EE22 Road (Hieroglyphic Canyon), V19 Road, S17 Road & W19 Road.

**MM 74.2 TABEGUACHE CREEK - County Road V 19**  🟡🔴

Just before crossing the highway bridge County Road V 19 is on the left. Site of the 1880 gold mining town of Cameville. Another one of the many natural surface roads along the Byway, the road parallels Tabeguache Creek briefly, crosses the creek then switches back to the rim as it heads east over open flats before reaching County Road Z 26. Another access point to the Rimrocker Trail. The mouth of Tabeguache Creek is on the left as the highway crosses the river. It’s one of the major drainages coming off the south side of the Uncompahgre Plateau. Inside the creek’s canyon walls is some rough terrain, but that’s what makes exploring it that much more fun.

**MM 74 NATURE CONSERVANCY - SAN MIGUEL RIVER TABEGUACHE PRESERVE**  🔴🔴

The 250-acre property runs along the river for 2 ½ miles preserving vital riparian habitat. One of the first reports of Black Phoebe’s establishing nesting sites in western Colorado some 20 years ago came from this area. It’s a nice place to stop for lunch or a break.

**MM 64.3 CALAMITY ROAD (NUCLA LOOP)**

Both the Juan Rivera Expedition of 1765 and the Dominguez and Escalante Expedition of 1776 were in this area. Escalante writes in their journal that they “went up a rather high and steep incline, but not too rocky, and started over an extensive mesa. . .” Scholars feel that this was Calamity Draw (see MM 62.3). In the early 1900s this bridge washed out, and probably lent its story to the naming of the road, bridge, and draw. Also, along this stretch of highway you can see rockwork supporting the old roadbed. The road was rebuilt from old mining 2-track to a graded road during the Roosevelt era, by the Civilian Conservation Corp (CCC). Highway 141 has been redirected and upgraded many times during its existence.

**MM 62.4 JUNCTION CO HWY 141 & HWY 90 PARADOX/BEDROCK SPUR**  🟡🟢🔴🟡🔴🟢🟡 The west segment of Highway 90 begins, winding up Dry Creek on its way to Paradox Valley. It’s worth a side trip off the Byway to visit Paradox Valley. The highway travels along the valley floor. Red rock cliffs rise on both sides of the valley. The valley received its name from A.C. Peale, a member of the 1875 Hayden Survey. Peale noted that the Dolores River didn’t run through the valley, but across it, splitting it in two. Paradox Valley is one of several salt valleys created by the action of subterranean salt. The salt was deposited by an ancient inland sea that dried up, and the remaining salt and gypsum covered over by subsequent geologic deposition.

BEDROCK - Near the center of the Paradox Valley is the town of Bedrock. The town of Bedrock was established in 1883. The Bedrock Post Office opened on November 8, 1883. The town’s general store and post office were built on solid rock, hence the name. Fun Fact: Bedrock is also the name of the fictional town setting of The Flintstones animated television series.



Just before crossing the Dolores River, County Road Y 11 intersects the pavement. The highway crosses the Dolores River near Bedrock, CO. There’s a small BLM campground along the river, but currently no services are available. The old Bedrock Store is just ahead. The west end of the valley is ranching country; creeks and springs that emanate from the nearby La Sal Mountains provide irrigation water for agricultural fields. Near the west end of the valley County Road U 5 passes through the town of Paradox on its way to Buckeye Reservoir – a camping spot favored by locals.

Like many western Colorado areas, Paradox Valley was homesteaded soon after the removal of the Utes in 1881. There are even a few stories of “sooners” sneaking into Paradox Valley to claim the best land, but most were turned back by the Utes. Since the Paradox region was on the fringes of civilization, even after legitimate settlers moved in, there were a good many outlaws, malcontents and men with checkered pasts that frequented the area. It was common knowledge that the notorious outlaw trail passed through Paradox.

Just south of Paradox Valley, along La Sal Creek is the site of the famous Cashin copper mine.

Part time rancher and resident Tom McCarty, his brother, Bill and Bill’s son, Fred, were the perpetrators of an ill-fated bank robbery in Delta in 1893. Fred and Bill were shot dead for their efforts, but Tom got away. He hid out in the nearby La Sal Mountains until things cooled down. He later caught a train at Crescent Junction, Utah, headed for Oregon. Tom ran with Butch Cassidy for a while.

PARADOX - The dry, sparsely populated valley is named after the apparently paradoxical course of the Dolores River. Colorado State Highway 90 follows Paradox Valley on its way from Naturita to the Utah state line, crossing the historic Dolores River Bridge near the small town of Bedrock. The town of Paradox lies a few miles north of the highway. Paradox is located at 5,000 feet at the Dolores River to nearly 6,000 feet at the southeast end. Steep sandstone and shale walls bound the valley to the northeast and southwest. The valley was named in 1875 by geologist and surveyor Albert Charles Peale after he noted that the Dolores River had a “desire to perform strange and unexpected things” in the area. Instead of flowing down the valley, the river emerges from a narrow gap in one wall, cuts perpendicularly across the middle, and exits through another gap. As a consequence of the unusual geography, the valley cannot be easily irrigated by the Dolores River, but springs and streams fed by snowmelt from the La Sal Range support the Valley.

**Local Attractions:**

- BLM Dolores River Recreation Site
- Buckeye Reservoir Recreation Site
- Rock Climbing off of Long Park Road (EE22)
- Paradox Valley Rock Art - National Historic Register Designation
- Public Land Access/Trails

**MM 62.3 DOMINGUEZ & ESCALANTE EXPEDITION**

**Historic Marker/Interpretive Sign**

The Expedition left Santa Fe on July 29, 1776 and would return on January 2, 1777, after traveling over 1,700 miles. All returned alive to Sante Fe, after facing all kinds of unimaginable challenges. But, at the time the Expedition was considered a failure. They had not made it to California. Looking back, we realize that they provided the first description of the American West, including the first maps of the area not yet explored by the Europeans. This is one of the markers that was erected along the route celebrating Colorado’s Bicentennial in 1976. On August 21, 1776, they camped in a meadow nearby.

**MM 62.3 VANCORUM**

Vancorum was built in the 1930s to house the executives of the VCA Mill near Naturita and was known as “Snob Hill”. A dozen plus log cabins are situated on the upper bench overlooking the San Miguel River. Today the cabins have been completely restored and are the sight of a new glamping park, Camp V.

**MM 60.7 NATURITA**

Naturita is located at 5431 feet above sea level on the San Miguel River. In 1881 a man named Payson built the first cabin in Naturita. The following year Rockwell H. Blake built an adobe house in the East End of the present town. The area’s primary source of income due to its remoteness from the railroad was cattle. Cattle could be driven to railheads in Montrose or Placerville on the hoof. The cowboys driving cattle to Montrose would follow a trail over the Uncompahgre Plateau now taken by Highway 90. In 1900 Naturita was primarily a stopping off place for freight wagons transporting copper ore from the Cashin Mine near Bedrock to the railroad in Placerville. Mrs. Rockwell Blake named Naturita which means Little Nature in Spanish. Mrs. Blake designated the place with this unusual name because of its beautiful setting beside the river.

**Local Attractions:**

- West End Visitors Center/UT Byway Interpretive Center - Interpretive Signs
- Little Nature Park
- Naturita Town Park
- Naturita Library
- Rimrocker Historical Society Museum
- International Dark Sky Community

**MM 60.4 JUNCTION CO HWY 141 & HWY 97 NUCLA SPUR**

Nucla is located at 5823 feet above sea level 5 miles north of Naturita, on Hwy 97, at the base of the Uncompahgre Plateau and the San Miguel Basin. In 1894 a ditch company called the Colorado Cooperative Company organized a colony of its members to build a seventeen-mile ditch to bring water from its head gate and the San Miguel Canyon northeast of Norwood to the Tabeguache Park. The colonists, not wanting to waste an acre of good farmland, situated the town site on a rocky hill unfit for farming. C.U. Williams, a member of the company, proposed the name Nucla for the new town, as he and many of the colonists believed it would become the “Nucleus” of the area. The arrival of the water to the Tabeguache Plateau was the beginning of farming and ranching that continues today.

Nucla is also the southern terminus of the Delta-Nucla Road. As the name suggests the mostly gravel road connects the towns of Nucla and Delta. The road is a major artery for those partaking in a host of motorized and non-motorized recreational pursuits. Mountain bikers can access both the Paradox and Tabeguache trails from the road. The campground near Columbine Pass is a favorite summertime camping area.

**Local Attractions:**

- Nucla Town Park & Volunteer Park
- Nucla Range Loops Trail System
- Rainbow Reservoir
- Rimrocker Trail Access
- Paradox Trail Access
- Nucla Library
- Public Land Access (USFS & BLM)
- International Dark Sky Community

**MM 57.5 PUBLIC LAND ACCESS - HWY 90**

Coming in from the north is the western terminus of the eastern segment of highway 90. The road goes over a hump then drops into the San Miguel River Valley. A few miles up the road it crosses the San Miguel River on its way up Cottonwood Creek before climbing to the crest of the Uncompahgre Plateau. This unpaved section of Highway 90 was used to drive cattle to Montrose for many years.

The river crossing is the site of the now abandoned town site of Pinon. In the late 1800’s Pinon was the second largest town in Montrose County. The Town of Pinon was the cooperative community of the Colorado Co-Operative Company (CCC) established in 1894. The CCC built 17- miles of ditch (High Line Canal) that flows water from the San Mlguel Rlver to Tabeguache Park, the current Town of Nucla. The Dltch was completed in 1903. Many of these early pioneers are buried at the Pinon Cemetery.

Once across the river a road travels up-river (right) to the Ledges Cottonwood Recreation Site managed by the BLM. Located in groves of cottonwoods along the San Miguel River. Cottonwood campground has 14 campsites. The river in this section flows over sandstone bedrock where rock ledges form large holes creating rapids during high water.

The drive-up Cottonwood Creek (left) is another diversion off the Byway worth the time and effort. The first meadows encountered along the road are on the historic Hill Ranch, now owned by the Weimer family. The Hill’s were not the first people to lay claim to the creekside fields.

**UT BYWAY - HWY 145**

**MM 116.8 UT JUNCTION CO HWY 141 & HWY 145**

Highway 145 continues on up the hill and is the western terminus of the Byway.

**DISAPPOINTMENT VALLEY SPUR - HWY 141**

Highway 141 continues by heading south. Although Hwy 141 is not the route of the Dominguez and Escalante Expedition, it allows an opportunity to explore some of the area they did travel through. Even by our modern standards this is a very rough barren country. It does not take much of an imagination to put yourself back in time to see the county as they experienced it. Roads built for energy development now provide roads (not paved or recommended if wet) to explore Disappointment Valley, Big Gypsum and Dry Creek Basin. Since few travelers can say they’ve been to Disappointment Valley... Take a photo in front of the “Disappointment Valley” road sign to send home!

**Local Attractions:**

- Spring Creek Basin Wild Horse Herd - Legend says that in the early 1900s, a Montana rancher came to Disappointment Valley with a herd of stolen horses that he raised to sell to the U.S. Cavalry and other groups. When the law began to close in on him, he gathered some of his horses and quickly left the area. [www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/whb\\_co\\_springcreek\\_map.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/whb_co_springcreek_map.pdf)
- Gypsum Valley Recreation Site (County Road 10Y) [www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/documents/files/CO\\_DoloresRiver\\_100k\\_BoatingMap.pdf](http://www.blm.gov/sites/blm.gov/files/documents/files/CO_DoloresRiver_100k_BoatingMap.pdf)

**MM 110.1 REDVALE**

Redlands Townsite Company was incorporated on August 31, 1907, The Post Office prohibited the use of the Redlands as it was already used so in 1909 the name was changed to Redvale. The town got its start as the headquarters for a large orchard operation, but the

altitude was too high to produce a predictable annual crop. The fruit trees were pulled up and the land went back to ranching and farming use. The official plot was recorded in 1912 dedicating one block to a park. The park and building have seen many dinners, town meetings and dances and is maintained by the residents of Redvale and the surrounding area. In the early years there was a hotel, general store, church and Post Office. Redvale was a frequent stopping place for travelers, ranchers, and freight wagons hauling copper and uranium ore from Paradox Valley to the railhead in Placerville.

South of Redvale at Indian Springs was the site of a Civilian Conservation Corp. camp in the late 1930’s. Like many of those camps, the Redvale camp housed hundreds of men who worked on a large variety of private and public works projects. The men were paid a modest wage with most of it being sent home to support their families.

**Local Attractions:**

- Redvale Community Park
- Public lands Access - 35.75 Road takes off to the south.

**MM 102.6 PUBLIC LAND ACCESS - ROAD A 42 Access to McKee Draw & Burn Canyon**

The area offers beautiful views of deep canyons with large cottonwoods and junipers, as well as mesa tops with panoramic views of Lone Cone Mountain, the La Sal Mountains of Utah, and the majestic San Juan Mountains.

The upper parking lot provides access to the Burn Canyon MTB trails and the McKee Draw hiking trails. The first loop from the parking area is Buttermilk Loop. It is an easy warm-up loop suitable for all ages and abilities. The larger Pinyon Point Loop is a continuation of Buttermilk Loop and offers great views of Burn Canyon, Naturita Canyon and the mouth of McKee Draw. North from Pinyon Point Loop the Old Nelson Cut-off passes along the edge of Hideout Canyon and connects to the other two loops in this trail system. Cedar Post Loop is a fun, fast, smooth loop.

Hideout Canyon is a continuation of Cedar Post Loop that is the most challenging loop in this trail system. It offers good views of Burn Canyon and the La Sal Mountains in Utah. Posey’s Spur Trail connects back to W35 road for an easy out back to the parking area.

**Local Attractions:**

- Posey’s Spur Trailhead
- Burn Canyon Trail System

**MM 101 NORWOOD**

The town is located atop Wright’s Mesa with scenic views in all directions.The 12,600-foot Lone Cone to the south is the scenic landmark best associated with the Norwood Community. In the 1880s the largest ranch in the area was owned by Harry B. Adsit who ran over 5,000 head of cattle and 1,000 horses on the 30 square mile range. One of Mr. Adsit’s cowboys was “Bud” LeRoy Parker, better known as Butch Cassidy, who robbed the bank in Telluride in 1889.

The town’s first post office and store were opened in 1885. The Gurley Reservoir was built near Norwood and provides irrigation water for the farmers and ranchers on Wrights Mesa.

**Local Attractions:**

- Norwood Town Park
- Thunder Trails - take Aspen St./42 Z Rd. to reach Thunder Road, follow the signs
- Burn Canyon Trail system
- Lone Cone Library
- Wright’s Mesa Historical Society Museum
- Public Land Access (USFS & BLM)
- International Dark Sky Community

**MM 99.4 MIRAMONTE RESERVOIR & LONE CONE SPUR - ROAD 44 Z**

The Lone Cone Road comes in from the south and provides access to a host of backcountry resources including the Lone Cone area, Beaver Park and Miramonte Reservoir. Lone Cone is the tall peak to the south that dominates the horizon. Following the signs to Dan Noble State Wildlife Area, Miramonte Reservoir is part of the wildlife area. In 2013 the lake was drained to remove undesirable warm water species and restocked with trout to bring the lake back to its previous status as a quality trout fishery. The Lone Cone area is a favored high-country four seasons recreation area.

**Local Attraction:**

Access to Busted Arm Draw. This offers dispersed camping opportunities and winter access for groomed crossed country ski trails.

**MM 96.1 NORWOOD HILL RECREATION SITE**

**Interpretive Sign**

After two bends in the road the Byway makes a ledgey descent into the San Miguel River Canyon. Much of the canyon is under BLM management, and is a Special Recreation Management Area. Over 22,000 acres of the area is managed as an Area of Critical Environmental Concern due to the canyon’s unique, relic riparian communities. The river, one of the few intact, undammed waterways in Colorado, has its source in the North San Juan Mountains near Telluride. The landscape makes a steady transition from the desert canyons and mesas to the Colorado high country.

At the bottom of Norwood Hill, the Byway crosses the San Miguel River with a BLM recreation site at the pullout on the right just before the bridge, there’s ADA restrooms and a picnic area (seasonal closures). Access to the river is possible from this site. [www.blm.gov/visit/san-miguel-river](http://www.blm.gov/visit/san-miguel-river).

COUNTY ROAD 47 Z - After crossing the river, the Sanborn Park Road intersection is encountered on the left. The county road travels along the river for several miles then climbs out of the canyon, crossing Sanborn Park, and eventually reaching Dave Wood Road on the Uncompahgre Plateau.

**MM 94.6 LOWER BEAVER CREEK RECREATION SITE**

Lower Beaver Recreation BLM site has a few developed campsites, ADA restrooms, tables and grills and good access to the river.

**MM 94.2 UPPER BEAVER CREEK RECREATION SITE & BOAT LAUNCH**

Beaver Creek BLM boat access is on the right – one of several put-ins along the river. The river is a favorite with kayakers, and during high water small rafts can negotiate the rapids.The site has a few developed campsites, ADA restrooms & tables.

**MM 94.1 PUBLIC LAND ACCESS - X48 ROAD**

Goodenough Gulch is a 4WD, high clearance trail that intersects with US Forest Service 539 on the Uncompahgre Plateau.

**MM 90 NATURE CONSERVANCY - SAN MIGUEL CANYON PRESERVE**

The Nature Conservancy manages sections of the canyon in cooperation with the BLM. This rugged, remote canyon is home to an extremely diverse assemblage of plant and animal species. It represents one of the last remaining, undisturbed, low to mid-elevation riparian areas in Colorado. The habitat along the San Miguel River is home to the raccoon, logtail weasel, American dipper, belted kingfisher, bald eagle and numerous songbirds. Several

informal pull outs along the Byway allow access to the river. The San Miguel River is a cold-water fishery with rainbow and cut-bow trout being the most common fish species.

**MM 87.1 SPECIES CREEK RECREATION SITE**

County Road M 44 begins as it crosses the river and follows Species Creek. A BLM day use site located just after crossing the river bridge provides access to the river. The road climbs to the high country north of Lone Cone.

The red rock canyon walls are from the Cutler Formation – it’s the same geologic formation that is exposed along the Dolores River near Gateway, only it’s at an elevation that’s over 2,000 feet higher.

**MM 86.7 CORRAL SITE RECREATION AREA**

The Corral Site is a US Forest Service (USFS) recreation site that offers river access for fishing. Parking available.

**MM 86 CADDIS FLATS RECREATION SITE**

The canyon in this area makes the transition from forest to high desert and is quite scenic.Below the Byway on a river flat is the BLM Caddis Flats Campground - a nice spot to camp and good access to the river.

**MM 84 (Hwy 145) PLACERVILLE**

The town of Placerville, located less than a mile down Hwy 145, was founded in 1877 as a placer gold mining town. When gold played out, the town became the shipping center for the San Miguel Basin. The Placerville stock yard was a major cattle shipping point for as long as the Rio Grande Southern Railroad operated. At one time it was the largest in the entire state.

**Local Attractions:**

- Placerville Community Park
- Placerville Boat Launch

*The End!*

**JUNCTION CO HWY 62 & HWY 145**

The junction of Colorado Highway 145 and Highway 62 near Placerville marks the southern end of the Unaweep – Tabeguache Scenic & Historic Byway and the beginning of the San Juan Skyway.







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## CHAMBER & TOURIST CENTER ADDRESSES & CONTACT

- West End Visitors Center & UT Byway Interpretive Center  
230 W. Main Street, Naturita, Colorado: 970.865.2350
- USFS Visitors Center, 1150 Forest St, Norwood: 970.327.4261
- Lone Cone Library, 1455 S Pinion St, Norwood: 970.327.4833
- Ball Park Campground, Uravan: Info Kiosk

## HELPFUL LINKS

- [WestEndColorado.com](http://WestEndColorado.com)
- [WestEndTrails.org](http://WestEndTrails.org)
- [Nucla-Naturita.com](http://Nucla-Naturita.com)
- [NorwoodColorado.com](http://NorwoodColorado.com)
- [blm.gov/maps/frequently-requested/colorado/gis-datasets](https://blm.gov/maps/frequently-requested/colorado/gis-datasets)

## CONTACT

UT Byway Committee | [UTBywayCO@gmail.com](mailto:UTBywayCO@gmail.com)

**DISCOVER MORE: [UTBYWAYCO.COM](http://UTBYWAYCO.COM)**

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Bureau of Land Management  
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Norwood Chamber of Commerce

